

March 11, 1992

Ms. Carol Withrow
Utah Audubon Society
519 Northmont Way
Salt Lake City, UT 84103

Dear Ms. Withrow:

We appreciate your comments regarding the proposed Distribution Plan for water within the Utah Lake Drainage Basin. We realize the importance of Utah Lake, for both recreational and wildlife purposes.

You expressed concern over the lack of information in the plan regarding the effect that the varying lake levels would have on the shoreline of Utah Lake. Although not distinctly presented in the plan, we do have data relating lake area to lake level. However, to utilize this data one would have to conduct studies to assess habitat condition and relate this to lake level. The effect of lake level variations on the shoreline of Utah Lake was not examined as part of the proposed Distribution plan. Under the proposed plan we are not saying that Utah Lake must be operated at a lower elevation. Rather, we are proposing guidelines to regulate the distribution of water. These guidelines set limits and storage amounts, but do not dictate a lower lake level.

Currently, the Central Utah Water Conservancy District is conducting a number of studies concerning various aspects of Utah

Ms. Carol Withrow
March 11, 1992
Page 2

Lake. Until the results of these studies are available, it is difficult to predict precisely how the various projects being considered will effect Utah Lake and what actions might be taken to mitigate these effects.

The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources submitted comments and expressed many of the same concerns that you did. The Utah Division of Environmental Quality has also expressed concerns regarding the possible degradation of water quality in Utah Lake. We agree that the quality of water in Utah Lake is also an important issue.

One final note about your comment on the "maximum lake level change specified in the plan of 9.2 feet." This is not a "maximum level change." Rather, this is the elevation where no storage water is available in Utah Lake, and all water rights would be cut. If Utah Lake reaches this level, the state will most certainly be experiencing severe drought conditions. Any water held upstream would have long since been released to Utah Lake to satisfy earlier priority water rights. If we are in a drought this severe, there will be nothing any regulatory agency can do to help.

Once again, thank you for submitting comments. We appreciate your involvement in this important issue and will keep you apprised of any future developments.

Ms. Carol Withrow
March 11, 1992
Page 3

Sincerely,

Robert L. Morgan, P.E.
State Engineer

RLM/wk

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